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Gabriel Sterling ✓
@GabrielSterling

Thank you @benadida for being a rational expert in elections. And he's right...the fear mongers need to stop. Their statements undermine Americans' faith in elections...the same outcome as Trump's stolen election claims. Often they say the same thing & reinforce each other.



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

A on the saga of Georgia voting machines where, in one county, machines were accessed by unauthorized individuals.

Some find GA's reaction insufficient. I think it's solid. I don't think there remains a big threat, and I think the fear-mongering should stop.

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3:51 PM · Oct 1, 2022 from Sandy Springs, GA · Twitter for iPhone

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David Cross @Cross_Examine · Oct 1

Replying to @GabrielSterling and @benadida

Incredibly irresponsible for senior GA SOS official to endorse tweets that are materially misleading about basic facts, eg claiming Coffee County breach was only "few hours." SOS should correct its paid vendor @benadida - not perpetuate misstatements. Voters need truth, not spin.

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19



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

Replying to @Cross_Examine and @GabrielSterling

Hey David, while we're talking about who's getting paid, recall that I disclosed my conflicts. Do you disclose that a number of the election security experts you cite are paid in a years-long lawsuit against Georgia? Are you working pro-bono on the lawsuit?

1



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Jeanne Dufort @dufort_jeanne · Oct 1

Replying to @GabrielSterling and @benadida

Was Ben's "advertorial" a bonus he threw in for you signing the bi-annual audit contract?

You debate your office when you declare a report by @CISAgov "fear-mongering".

It's remarkable to see you pivot from "didn't happen" to "its not so bad".

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Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

Replying to @dufort_jeanne @GabrielSterling and @CISAgov

I wrote those tweets. They're my independent opinion. I've disclosed my potential conflicts. I've disagreed with Georgia SoS in the past, and I'm sure

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@JennaConaway

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I will in the future.

Not everyone who disagrees with you is a shill.

1

[Show replies](#)**Marilyn Marks** @MarilynRMarks1 · Oct 1

...

Replying to @GabrielSterling and @benadida

The disinformation about election technology and security from the SOS office needs to stop!

1



7

**Doug Patterson** @dougpt1082 · Oct 1

...

Replying to @GabrielSterling and @benadida

But the people in that one county need to be in jail. Gabe, what would the Republican reaction be if that happened in Fulton? Oh lord, would they be screaming.

1



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**Jonathan Kesler** @keslerlaw24 · Oct 1

...

Replying to @GabrielSterling and @benadida

I think it's the lack of prosecuting the criminals and the lack of any changes in the law to prevent this in the future that gets people angry over this. We're one stolen election away from chaos.

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**Sean B** @SeanBarryArts · Oct 1

...

Replying to @GabrielSterling and @benadida

so by your logic we cant raise issue? lets just let the powers that be create new laws, over see their own elections (kemp sos), and if we say something we are rocking the boat.

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**Eric Beneker** @ericbeneker · Oct 1

...

Replying to @GabrielSterling and @benadida

One county in GA and other counties across the US it appears

1

**Laurie A** @lad1121 · Oct 2

...

Replying to @GabrielSterling and @benadida

Ben is making his own BMD so of course he's going to say anything to make BMDs seem totally secure. Do you really not see any conflict of interest?

1

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Ben Adida
@benadida

A [redacted] on the saga of Georgia voting machines where, in one county, machines were accessed by unauthorized individuals.

Some find GA's reaction insufficient. I think it's solid. I don't think there remains a big threat, and I think the fear-mongering should stop.

2:25 PM · Oct 1, 2022 · Twitter for Android

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Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

Replying to @benadida

A disclaimer: @voting_works, the non-profit I lead, is paid by the State of Georgia for software and support of post-election audits, like the Nov 2020 one that got some press. We don't work on Georgia's voting machines – in fact, we compete with Dominion, Georgia's vendor.



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8



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

So, in late 2020 & early 2021, unauthorized individuals gained access to voting equipment for a few hours in Coffee County. They copied the hard drives and, more importantly, we can't be fully certain about what else they did with physical access to the voting equipment.



3



3



12



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

Let's be clear: it's a very bad idea to give unauthorized individuals physical access to voting equipment. Those individuals should be prosecuted, and protocols for county officials should be clear about never letting that happen again. OK, let's talk about what we do next.



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24



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

In this story, there's four types of machines: a county server to manage ballot definitions, ballot-marking devices voters use to prepare & print a ballot, precinct scanners voters use to cast their ballot, and a central scanner for high-speed tabulation of vote-by-mail ballots.



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Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

When an unauthorized individual gains access to voting equipment, what are we worried about? (a) they stole credentials that later give them access they shouldn't have, and (b) they've modified / corrupted the behavior of the voting machine.



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11



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

(c) can be remedied fairly easily: reset all the passwords and other

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(a) can be remedied fairly easily: reset all the passwords and other credentials if any.

Should we worry about voting machine software being leaked? Not really. State actors already have the software. To assume otherwise is foolish. Threat landscape hasn't changed meaningfully.

5 12



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

(b) is a different ballgame. Once a bad actor gets their hands on a voting machine, it's tricky to detect & remedy whatever they may have done. Some would convincingly argue it's impossible. So Georgia chose to replace their equipment, which is an expensive but great precaution.

2 1 8



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

Now, we need to not get carried away here. Replacing the machines is the right precaution, but the attack that this precaution protects against remains very unlikely.

1 1 12



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

For someone to plant hard-to-detect election corruption software or hardware on a set of machines in just a few hours of access is *extremely* difficult to pull off. But okay, we can all agree that elections are important, let's protect ourselves and swap out the equipment.

2 10



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

Now, even after this equipment change, some are still worried that only the BMDs are being replaced right now, while the server was replaced a few months prior, and the central scanner, which is very expensive, is not being replaced at all.

3 1 8



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

They're worried that, since memory cards & USB sticks make contact between these machines, theoretically, if one machine is left infected, it can reinfect every other one later. Thus, these folks would prefer to see all the election equipment replaced in one fell swoop.

1 2 8



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

The interesting thing about opining on security is that it doesn't cost anything to suggest more precautions. Opinions are free, but implementing more precautions is not. So we have to analyze the actual benefit.

2 1 10



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

Let's review the concern: an attacker writes a virus and installs it on ballot-marking devices. The virus transmits itself to new server when a memory card is returned from BMD. Then, the virus transmits itself back to the newly replaced BMDs from the newly contaminated server.

3 1 6



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

This is hard to believe. These machines are never networked. The virus would have to operate across multiple elections over years. It would have to be capable of moving from BMD to server and back again. All without being detected. No command & control, fully autonomously.

2 1 6



Ben Adida @benadida · Oct 1

Is this conceivable? Sure

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Is this even a little likely? No.

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**Ben Adida** @benadida · Oct 1

...

Coffee County saw ~15,000 cast votes in 2020. Altering more than 1,500 would be a 20% swing. Even with faulty exit polls, that raises eyebrows. So we're now talking about a hack arguably more complex than Stuxnet, in order to steal maybe 1,500 votes?

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**Ben Adida** @benadida · Oct 1

...

Also, we still have paper ballots! If you're corrupting tabulation, that leaves a trace. Ballot-marking devices, that's harder to detect, but even if only 10% of voters check their printed ballots, that's ~150 voters complaining about ballot misprints. That's gonna get noticed.

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**Ben Adida** @benadida · Oct 1

...

Replacing the ballot-marking devices is a good precaution. But the idea that a few individuals, dumb enough to be caught on camera, deployed a virus that stayed dormant for years, transmits itself across multiple machines... all for 1500 votes? Not a reasonable threat analysis.

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**Ben Adida** @benadida · Oct 1

...

Elections are about layers of defense. Paper ballots. Audits. Locked down machines. Chain of custody controls. It was good to replace machines in Coffee County, even in phases. A super sophisticated attack is fun in a Mission Impossible movie, but not realistic in this case.

2



13

**Ian Ridgeway** @Ridgewaylan · Oct 2

...

Replying to @benadida

One other thing to mention - to write a virus that gives you the results you want, you most likely have to know what's on the ballot. It would be incredibly difficult to write a software that skewed votes a certain way without knowing what all is going to be on the ballot.

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**Ben Adida** @benadida · Oct 2

...

Replying to @Ridgewaylan

You're right that it's harder! I do think a capable adversary could figure this out, say by biasing one party over another.

I think the complexity is more about transmission across machine types and never being detected.

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2

[Show replies](#)**John Panzer** @jpanzer · Oct 1

...

Replying to @benadida

I might agree with your main point. But do you see how characterizing a different POV as "fear mongering" works against the possibility of discussion?

1



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**Ben Adida** @benadida · Oct 1

...

Replying to @jpanzer

I'm torn. On the one hand you're right, I could have used more neutral language.

**Jenna Conaway**
@JennaConaway

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On the other hand, there are folks once again screaming that elections are insecure because of this situation, and I find that irresponsible.



4



Dr. Elizabeth Sudduth @hydropsyche1 · Oct 1



Replying to @benadida

You never explain why we need to use "ballot marking devices" that create a barcode of our votes instead of ones that just print out how we voted legibly or just marking paper ballots by hand.



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